

What is claimed is:

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1. A method for providing multiple types of content for users of the Internet, comprising the steps of:
- 5 publishing at least one file on at least one file server that provides Internet users with access to a plurality of different types of information and services;
- establishing a connection between said file and at least one web page that is displayed at an Internet web site; and
- causing at least some of the contents of said file to appear within a
- 10 banner whenever a user downloads said page for display.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said banner provides access to a plurality of different categories of informational content.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein said categories are displayed to a user by means of a menu within said banner, and are individually selectable by the
- 15 user from said menu.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein said banner displays individual headlines associated with a selected category of informational content.
5. The method of claim 4 wherein said individual headlines are displayed in a scrolling manner.

6. The method of claim 4 wherein said headlines are stored in a file that is downloaded to a user's site when the user selects the category associated with the headlines.

5 7. The method of claim 4 wherein each displayed headline comprises a link to a file which contains the content associated with the headline, and which is displayed to the user when the user clicks upon the headline while it is displayed.

8. The method of claim 4 wherein said banner further includes a link to cause all of the headlines associated with a selected category to be displayed for viewing by the user.

10 9. The method of claim 2 wherein said banner further includes a search function which enables a user to conduct a search from the banner for information of interest in the Internet.

15 10. The method of claim 2 wherein said banner further includes a community services category which presents a dialog box in which a user can enter text for viewing by other users and view text entered by other users.

11. The method of claim 2 wherein said banner further includes a link that provides access to a web site that contains a listing of product lines, and individual manufacturer information about products in each product line.

20 12. The method of claim 11 wherein said manufacturer information comprises graphical files of product brochures.

13. The method of claim 2, wherein said banner further includes a link that provides access to a web site that provides e-commerce services.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein said banner is configurable by users to display only selected items from the plurality of different information and services.

15. A method for providing persistent source of content for users of the Internet, comprising the steps of:

publishing at least one file containing content for an Internet web site banner on at least one file server;

establishing an agreement with at least one entity that hosts an Internet web site, which agreement provides irrevocable rights for a period of time to display the contents of said file as a banner on at least one page of the Internet web site hosted by said entity; and

causing contents of said file to appear as a banner whenever a user downloads said page for display.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said agreement is established with a plurality of entities that host Internet web sites, and the contents of said file are caused to appear as a banner whenever a user downloads a web page from any one of said entities' Internet web sites.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein compensation is provided to each of said entities for said irrevocable rights, and the amount of compensation determines the location at which the banner appears on each entity's web site page.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein compensation is provided to each of said entities for said irrevocable rights, and the amount of compensation determines the frequency at which the banner appears on each entity's web site.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein compensation is provided to each of said entities for said irrevocable rights, and the amount of compensation determines the size of the banner appears on each entity's web site page.

20. The method of claim 15 wherein said banner appears on every page of the Internet web site hosted by said entity.

21. The method of claim 15 wherein said banner comprises a multi-function portal that provides Internet users with access to a plurality of different types of information and services.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein said banner provides access to a plurality of different categories of informational content.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein said categories are displayed to a user by means of a menu within said banner, and are individually selectable by the user from said menu.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein said banner displays individual headlines associated with a selected category of informational content in a scrolling manner.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein said individual headlines are displayed in a scrolling manner.

26. The method of claim 24 wherein said headlines are stored in a file that is downloaded to a user's site when the user selects the category associated with the headlines.

27. The method of claim 24 wherein each displayed headline comprises a link to a file which contains the content associated with the headline, and which is displayed to the user when the user clicks upon the headline while it is displayed.

28. The method of claim 24 wherein said banner further includes a link to cause all of the headlines associated with a selected category to be displayed for viewing by the user.

29. The method of claim 20 wherein said banner further includes a search function which enables a user to conduct a search from the banner for information of interest in the Internet.

30. The method of claim 20 wherein said banner further includes a community services category which presents a dialog box in which a user can enter text for viewing by other users and view text entered by other users.

31. The method of claim 20 wherein said banner further includes a link that provides access to a web site that contains a listing of product lines, and individual manufacturer information about products in each product line.

32. The method of claim 20, wherein said banner further includes a link that provides access to a web site that provides e-commerce services.

33. The method of claim 31 wherein said manufacturer information comprises graphical files of product brochures.

34. The method of claim 19 wherein said banner is configurable by users to display only selected items from the plurality of different information and services.

35. The method of claim 14 wherein said publishing step includes publishing a plurality of different files that contain content relating to different respective topics, and causing the contents of different ones of said files to be displayed in banners in accordance with the web sites in which the banners appear.

36. The method of claim 13 wherein said rights are perpetual in nature.

37. A method for promoting patronage of a web site on the Internet, comprising the steps of:

hosting a web site on at least one server that is connected to the Internet;

providing user who agree to use said web site as a certified home  
page with temporary shares of stock;

monitoring users patronage of said web site; and

5 converting a user's shares of temporary stock to irrevocable shares  
of stock upon confirmation of continued patronage of the web site by the user.

38. The method of claim 37, wherein a plurality of shares of temporary  
stock are initially issued to a user when the user agrees to use the web site as a  
certified home page, and portions of the issued shares of temporary stock are  
converted to irrevocable shares for continued use over successively longer periods  
10 of time.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein one or more shares of the  
temporary stock are revoked if continued patronage of the web site is not  
confirmed for a predetermined period of time.

40. The method of claim 37 further including the step of issuing  
15 additional shares of temporary stock when the user obtains an e-mail address that  
is affiliated with the web site.

41. The method of claim 37 further including the step of issuing  
additional shares of temporary stock when the user agrees to use an Internet  
service provider that is affiliated with the web site for that user's source of access  
20 to the Internet.

42. The method of claim 37 further including the step of temporarily displaying users' names on said web site on a random basis, and declaring a user to be an instant winner of a prize if that user clicks on the user's name while it is being displayed.